
IV. English Language Arts, Reading Comprehension, Grade 5

Grade 5 English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension Test

The spring 2010 grade 5 MCAS English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on learning standards in the two content strands of the Massachusetts *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2001) listed below. Specific learning standards for grade 5 are found in the *Supplement to the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2004). Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

■ Language (*Framework*, pages 19–26; *Supplement*, page 10)

■ Reading and Literature (*Framework*, pages 35–64; *Supplement*, pages 11–13)

The *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* and *Supplement* are available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

In test item analysis reports and on the Subject Area Subscore pages of the MCAS *School Reports* and *District Reports*, ELA Reading Comprehension test results are reported under two MCAS reporting categories: **Language** and **Reading and Literature**, which are identical to the two framework content strands listed above.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The MCAS grade 5 ELA Reading Comprehension test included two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions. Selected common reading passages and approximately half of the common test items are shown on the following pages as they appeared in test booklets.

Reference Materials and Tools

The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former limited English proficient students only, during both ELA Reading Comprehension test sessions. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA Reading Comprehension test session.

Cross-Reference Information

The tables at the conclusion of this chapter indicate each released and unreleased common item's reporting category and the framework general standard it assesses. The correct answers for released multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the released item table.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 1

DIRECTIONS

This session contains one reading selection with five multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

In this poem, a rainstorm interrupts lessons in a classroom in Africa. Wooden shutters are closed to keep the rain out, making it too dark to read or write. Read the poem and then answer the questions that follow.

In the Ebony* Room

In my classroom
We study by sunlight.
But when the wind whistles,
And the clouds hurry in front of the sun,
5 The trees bow.
Leaves flutter,
And the pages of our books
Begin flipping by themselves,
And the clouds are full of rain.
10 Then the wooden windows
Of my classroom
Are pulled shut.

In the ebony dark room
Grinning students whisper
15 How wonderful it is
Not to have to do their
Arithmetic, reading, and writing.
The whispering fades.
On wooden desks students rest their heads.
20 On wooden tables teachers rest their heads.
For in the ebony room
The rain sings
A lullaby to students and teachers.

The pit-a-pat of the rain
25 On the wooden windowpanes
And the whistling wind
Get louder.
Pupils wake up and sing:
“Stop, rain, stop.”
30 We cannot play on green grass.
We cannot go home to our parents.
Stop, rain, stop.
Come back another day.”

But the rain, with a mind of its own,
35 Beats against our wooden windows.
And pit-a-pat we hear it say:
“I have a rain forest to fill
And grass to keep green!
I will rain till I’m through.
40 Children can wait.
My music will not.”
So in the dark room we nod and doze
To the rain’s lullaby.

—Isaac Olaleye

* *ebony* — a dark wood or a shade of black

“In the Ebony Room” by Isaac Olaleye, from *The Distant Talking Drum*. Copyright © 1995 by Isaac Olaleye. Reprinted by permission of Wordsong, an imprint of Boyds Mills Press.

- 1 Which line in the poem **first** signals a change?
 - A. “We study by sunlight.”
 - B. “But when the wind whistles,”
 - C. “Leaves flutter,”
 - D. “Begin flipping by themselves,”

- 2 In the second stanza, how does the rain affect the students?
 - A. They are fascinated by the noise of the storm.
 - B. They are bored because recess has been cancelled.
 - C. They are happy to have a break from their lessons.
 - D. They are upset because they must stay in their seats.

- 3 What is the **most likely** reason the poet uses repetition in lines 19 and 20?
 - A. to show that schoolwork is boring
 - B. to suggest the great power of the wind
 - C. to suggest the crowded conditions in the classroom
 - D. to show that the storm affects everyone in the classroom

4 Stanzas 3 and 4 describe a conflict between

- A. the students and the teachers.
- B. the parents and the teachers.
- C. the students and the rain.
- D. the rain and the parents.

5 Line 34 states that the rain has “a mind of its own.” Which of the following lines supports this image?

- A. “And the whistling wind”
- B. ““Stop, rain, stop.””
- C. ““I will rain till I’m through.””
- D. “So in the dark room we nod and doze”

Question 6 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 6 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 6** Explain how the students in the poem see the rain as both good **and** bad. Support your answer with important details from the poem.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 2

DIRECTIONS

This session contains one reading selection with nine multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

What would you need to know if you wanted to travel to Antarctica? Read the selection to find out and then answer the questions that follow.

Planning Your Trip to Antarctica

by Lucy Jane Bledsoe

- 1 **W**hy would *anyone* go to Antarctica? It's the coldest, windiest, driest, and most remote continent on Earth. Winds coming from the South Pole can howl across the ice at 200 miles an hour. The temperature can drop to 100 degrees *below* zero Fahrenheit (-73°C). An ice sheet, three miles thick in places, covers 98 percent of the continent, giving it the nickname the Ice. There are only two ways to get there: by plane, which, if it flies into a blizzard, might not be able to land; or by ship across the roughest seas on Earth.
- 2 If you're the kind of person who says, "Yeah! Sign me up!" when you read those kinds of facts, then Antarctica is the continent for you.

When to Go

- 3 **T**he seasons in the southern hemisphere are the opposite of those in the northern hemisphere. Summertime in Antarctica is November, December, and January. Wintertime is June, July, and August. In an Antarctic summer, the sun never sets. In an Antarctic winter, the sun never rises.
- 4 For much of the year, Antarctica is surrounded by ice. In the dead of winter, the sea ice forms a huge skirt around the continent, 30 to 900 miles wide and 10 feet thick. This means that Antarctica doubles in size each winter. Only a handful of scientists and their staffs stay there during these dark, frigid winter months.
- 5 The best time to visit is the summer. In November, the pack ice begins to break up and the penguins start courting and mating. In December and January, their chicks hatch. In February, the whales are at their most active, and the penguin chicks leave the nests.

How to Get There

- 6 **A**ntarctica is very hard to get to because it sits all alone at the bottom of the world. It's more than 2,800 miles from Africa, 2,000 from Australia, 650 from South America, and 8,850 from New York.

- 7 Almost all tourists go to Antarctica by ship. There is one flight company that takes private parties to the Ice, but these flights cost many thousands—sometimes even hundreds of thousands—of dollars. They're used only by very wealthy tourists or by explorers who have spent years raising money to support their expeditions.
- 8 Tourist ships leave from the port town Ushuaia, on the southern tip of Argentina. Two National Science Foundation ships, the *Laurence M. Gould* and the *Nathaniel B. Palmer*, leave from another port town, Punta Arenas, in Chile. These ships usually go to the Antarctic Peninsula, a long arm that reaches out from the continent. To get from the tip of South America to the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, a ship must cross the Drake Passage—legendary for its stormy weather and giant waves. Many people spend the



An Air Force LC-130, equipped with skis for landing, transports scientists and workers to Antarctica and back.

entire voyage being seasick. Once in a while, the crossing is calm, and then the ship's crew call that stretch of water Drake Lake.

9 American scientists and their helpers who are traveling to the interior of Antarctica fly from Christchurch, New Zealand, on U.S. Air Force planes, operated by the 109th Airlift Wing of the New York Air National Guard. These LC-130s are outfitted with skis instead of wheels for landing on the ice runways.

10 The flight from Christchurch to McMurdo Station, the biggest American base in Antarctica, takes eight hours. Boomerang flights—ones that turn around midway—are common. The planes can't carry enough fuel to fly to Antarctica and back again to New Zealand. They must refuel in Antarctica. But when there's a blizzard on the Ice, the pilots can't land to refuel. So at the midway point, the pilot always radios ahead. If there's a chance of a storm, the plane turns around and flies back to New Zealand. One third of all flights headed for Antarctica are forced to turn around midway. This midway point is called the point of no return.

Antarctic People: Brad Range

Each year the National Science Foundation selects a Boy Scout or a Girl Scout to travel to Antarctica as a special visitor. The scout, who must be at least 18 years old, stays for a couple of months and works on a variety of science projects. Over the 2003–2004 season, Boy Scout Brad Range worked on the Ice, studying everything from penguins to ozone levels in the atmosphere. For New Year's Eve, Range was at the South Pole, where he got recruited to be lead singer in the local rock group El Hot Soup. Accompanied by the head chef on bass and a shop mechanic on electric guitar, Range helped the Polies—as people at South Pole Station call themselves—celebrate the New Year.

"Planning Your Trip to Antarctica" by Lucy Jane Bledsoe, from *How to Survive in Antarctica*. Copyright © 2006 by Lucy Jane Bledsoe. Reprinted by permission of Holiday House, Inc.

- 7 What does paragraph 1 suggest about the continent of Antarctica?
 - A. Scientists rarely are able to research Antarctica.
 - B. There are many different landforms in Antarctica.
 - C. People know very little about the history of Antarctica.
 - D. Antarctica experiences some of the most severe weather in the world.
- 8 According to paragraph 4, how does Antarctica double in size each winter?
 - A. Giant snowstorms create huge mountains.
 - B. More scientists visit to study the climate.
 - C. Many tourists arrive to observe wildlife.
 - D. Sea water freezes along the shoreline.
- 9 According to the selection, in which month should a person who is interested in watching whales go to Antarctica?
 - A. January
 - B. February
 - C. November
 - D. December
- 10 According to the selection, what is the **main** reason most tourists travel to Antarctica by ship instead of by plane?
 - A. Flying costs too much.
 - B. Flying is too dangerous.
 - C. Boats can reach more places.
 - D. Boats allow more sightseeing.

- 11 According to the selection, when is the Drake Passage sometimes called Drake Lake?
- A. when it is frozen solid
 - B. when it is easier to cross
 - C. when scientists are part of the crew
 - D. when the voyage seems shorter than it is
- 12 According to the selection, what special equipment is used on planes going to Antarctica?
- A. skis
 - B. wheels
 - C. heaters
 - D. propellers

- 13 According to the selection, which of the following **best** describes Brad Range?
- A. He is a professional musician who entertained at the South Pole.
 - B. He is a famous scientist who studies wildlife at the South Pole.
 - C. He is a skilled pilot who flies tourists to the South Pole.
 - D. He is a young man who visited the South Pole.

- 14 Read the statement from paragraph 1 in the box below.

The temperature can drop to 100 degrees *below* zero . . .

Why is the word ***below*** written in italics?

- A. to show a direction
 - B. to highlight an opinion
 - C. to highlight a key word
 - D. to indicate an unfamiliar word
- 15 In paragraph 4, which word is used in an unusual way?
- A. year
 - B. skirt
 - C. wide
 - D. months

Question 16 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 16 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 16** Based on the selection, explain why a trip to Antarctica could be considered a great adventure. Support your answer with important information from the selection.

**Grade 5 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2010 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	B
2	40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	C
3	40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	D
4	41	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	C
5	41	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	C
6	42	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	
7	46	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
8	46	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
9	46	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
10	46	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	A
11	47	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
12	47	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	A
13	47	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
14	47	<i>Language</i>	5	C
15	47	<i>Language</i>	4	B
16	48	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	

* Answers are provided here for multiple-choice items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for open-response items, which are indicated by shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

**Grade 5 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2010 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards**

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
17	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
18	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8
19	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
20	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
21	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
22	<i>Language</i>	4
23	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
24	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
25	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
26	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8
27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	10
32	<i>Language</i>	5
33	<i>Language</i>	4
34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
36	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
37	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
38	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
39	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12